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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents strategies developed by six adult basic education (ABE) staff members for helping students with specific learning problems. The strategies were devised through reading, talking with experts in the field, attending a workshop, and experimenting with modified teaching strategies. The guide addresses 36 specific learning problems grouped under these six headings: reading and language problems; writing problems; mathematics problems; study skills problems; memory problems; and behavior problems. For each problem, suggestions for remediation (ways to overcome and solve the problem) and compensation (ways to work around the problem) are presented. For background information, the guide contains an appendix that includes the federal legal definition of learning disabilities and a definition and checklist on learning disabilities provided by the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. (KC)

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LEARNING PROBLEMS OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS: REMEDIATION AND COMPENSATIONS

by

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All conclusions stated in the handbook are the authors' alone.

LEARNING PROBLEMS OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
List of learning problems	2
READING AND LANGUAGE PROBLEMS	4
Reversals of letters	4
Trouble visualizing without tactile stimultaion	5
Left-right problems	6
Auditory discrimination problems	7
Skipping lines or words	9
Trouble processing written information	10
Leaving off or changing endings	11
Alphabet sequence problems	12
WRITING PROBLEMS	13
Bizarre spelling	13
Illegible penmanship	14
Trouble getting words from brain to hand	15
MATH RPOBLEMS	16
Understanding place value	16
Trouble memorizing math facts	17
STUDY SKILLS PROBLEMS	21
Sequencing problems	21
Parts/whole problems	22
Trouble following written directions	24
Trouble following verbal directions	25
Lack of strategies for problem solving	26
Not seeing patterns	28
Not able to generalize or transfer	29
Upset about exceptions to rules	30
Problems with analysis of task	31
Takes excessive time to look up words in alphabetical order	32
MEMORY PROBLEMS	33
General memory problems	33
Problems with short-term memory	34
Problems with long-term memory	35
BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	36
Short attention span	36
Cultural impoverishment	38
Low frustration level	39
Problems with time management	40
Extreme anxiety about mistakes	42
Inability to work independently	44
Trouble with concentration	45
Low self esteem	46
Inability to work with others	47
Trouble with figurative or ambiguous language	48

APPENDIX

Federal definition of learning disability i

Adult learning disability definition i

Symptom checklist iii

LEARNING PROBLEMS OF A.B.E. STUDENTS: REMEDIATION AND COMPENSATIONS

Introduction

What problems make learning difficult and frustrating for A.B.E. students? How can we — as teachers and tutors — help student with specific learning problems?

In this booklet, six Dover Adult Learning staff members share the result of our attempt to answer these questions with practical and effective suggestions. We purposely refer to students' difficulties as "learning problems", not "learning disabilities", since we are not experts in diagnosis or prescription. We might use the term "learning challenges" instead of "learning disabilities" because many students with learning problems are able to make great progress once they learn effective skills and strategies to overcome their difficulties.

For over a year, we read about learning problems, talked with experts in the field, attended a twelve-hour workshop, and experimented with and modified teaching strategies in our effort to become more helpful to our A.B.E. students. This booklet focuses on those strategies we found to be practical and effective. The specific learning problems we address are listed on page three.

For each problem, we present "remediation" and "compensations". While the distinction is seldom clear-cut and there are strategies which fall under both categories, remediations are generally ways to overcome and solve the problems while compensations are ways to work around a problem. Just as we cannot prescribe what strategy will work, we cannot dictate whether a teacher should focus on remediation or compensation; what works well with one student may do nothing for another. Indeed, some of our strategies may seem contradictory because they address different types of students.

One of our aims in creating this booklet was to take some of the guesswork out of helping a student. One way we can eliminate some of the teacher's and the students'

frustration is to spot learning problems more quickly; we have included "behavioral clues" where applicable to achieve this end.

Some of the learning problems we discuss overlap; many are related to other problems. Since a list of these connections would be lengthy and subjective, we leave it to you, the individual reader, to see the connections in your own students.

At the beginning of this study, we worried that remediations and compensations for learning problems might be prescriptive and, thus, not fit well with the self-empowerment we see as a crucial goal of adult education. On the contrary, we learned that the most effective approaches often involve learners in "thinking about their own thinking", explaining to us which strategies work for them, and in developing their own personal remediations and compensations. All of these approaches work best when the learner becomes a full partner in attacking his/her own learning problems.

One of the unforeseen benefits of our study has been more communication among our staff members about students and strategies. We hope that you will extend this work and this communication.

For your background information, the appendix contains the federal legal definition of learning disabilities and a definition and checklist on learning disabilities provided by the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities.

Reading and Language Problems

1. Reversals of letters
2. Trouble visualizing without tactile stimulation
3. Left-right problems
4. Auditory discrimination problems
5. Skipping lines or words
6. Trouble processing written information
7. Leaving off or changing endings
8. Alphabet sequence problems

Writing Problems

9. Bizarre spelling
10. Illegible penmanship
11. Trouble getting words from brain to hand

Math Problems

12. Understanding place value
13. Trouble memorizing math facts

Study Skills Problems

14. Sequencing problems
15. Parts/whole problems
16. Trouble following written directions
17. Trouble following verbal directions
18. Lack of strategies for problem solving

Study Skills Problems (cont.)

19. Not seeing patterns
20. Not able to generalize or transfer
21. Upset about exceptions to rules
22. Problems with analysis of task
23. Takes excessive time to look up words in alphabetical order

Memory Problems

24. General memory problems
25. Problems with short-term memory
26. Problems with long-term memory

Behavior Problems

27. Short term attention span
28. Cultural impoverishment
29. Low frustration level
30. Problems with time management
31. Extreme anxiety about mistakes
32. Inability to work independently
33. Trouble with concentration
34. Low self esteem
35. Inability to work with others
36. Trouble with figurative or ambiguous language

READING AND LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

1. **Reversals Of Letters:** Student commonly confuses and reverses the letters p, b, d, g, and q, n and r, and words such as was/saw, on/no, of/for, form/from, and even/ever.

Remediation:

1. Direct student to the meaning of what he is reading so that context can help.
2. Ask student to reread and check word(s). She may pick up her own error.
3. Have student verbalize what the spelling differences are in the confused words. The intention is to make the student aware of the particular difficulty he has.
4. Have student exaggerate the last sound of the word she is reading or spelling. Have her translate this sound into a letter and check if the letter she gets matches the last letter in the word (excluding silent e or combinations such as gh, ph, mn, etc.)

Compensations:

1. Have students identify their own reversals and develop color-coded index cards to keep on hand for self checking.
2. Have students become aware of the reversals that often give them difficulty and develop a mental alarm which reminds them to analyze the letters or words in question carefully.
3. Make student aware of certain tricks to help identify particular letters.

   Example: By holding his thumb and forefinger together and leaving his other fingers straight, the student can form the letter "b" on his left hand, "d" on his right.

2. **Trouble Visualizing Letters, Numbers, and Words without Tactile Stimulation:** Student uses hand or finger to show writing or writes out words or numbers in air or on her own hand, especially before spelling a word or doing a math problem.

   Behavioral clue: Student hides hand under table when working.

Remediation:

1. Develop student awareness that his learning style requires tactile input.
2. Discuss tranference to paper, i.e. doing scratch work on paper to get tactile input.
3. Use sandpaper letters, felt letters, and pans of sand, etc., when teaching beginning readers who require tactile input.
4. Use dominoes for math, since students can feel the number of dots.
5. Have students experiment writing with a pencil on rough paper, since there is more tactile sense involved than with a pen on smooth paper.

Compensations:

1. Make student aware that they need tactile input and that they should use this ability as efficiently as possible to enhance learning.
2. Encourage students to choose their own writing instruments and paper.
3. Use devices such as Franklin speller, calculator, to compare letters, numbers.

3. **Left-Right Problems:** Student reads words or sentences from right to left or reverses parts of words. Student makes reversals when reading or writing numbers or carries out math processes in the wrong direction.

Remediation:

1. Teach student to put finger or pencil on beginning letter of each new line or word or beginning digit of each new number.
2. Have student practice tracking with her finger or pencil from the beginning of a line to the end and down to the next.
3. Make student aware that he has difficulty with reversals and that he should use caution when beginning a new line of reading and/or writing letters and numbers.

Compensations:

1. Put a left-right arrow at the top of the page before student begins to read.
2. Keep model math examples with individual steps labeled and marked for direction and use these examples for reference.
3. Ask student to write the numbers 1 through 10, or the alphabet. Be sure the student has written the numbers or the alphabet left to right. If so, remind her to read in the same direction that she wrote.

4. **Auditory Discrimination Problems:** Student has trouble differentiating short vowel sounds, often pronounces words incorrectly, or has problems with spelling.

   Behavioral Clue: Student insists on working on spelling and sees other work as irrelevant.

Remediation:

1. Review phonics step-by-step.
2. Exaggerate vowel sounds to help students hear the differences in pronunciation.
3. Teach patterns such as **ap, an,** and **ad** words instead of individual letter sounds.
4. Provide students with a three-step method for improving spelling: read, write, and listen.
5. Use minimal pair drills to sharpen discrimination.
   Example: (pen/pan) Which do you write with? (cat/cot) Which is an animal?
6. Use materials designed for learning disabled students like **Spell of Words** from Educators Publishing Service. This book provides sequential spelling practice on word patterns.
7. Use computer drills with voice tapes or language masters for repeated discrimination practice.
8. Use word wheels or teacher-generated exercises which leave out problem letters — vowels, blends, suffixes, etc. — in words and sentences.
9. Give student part of a word and have him practice rhyming — trying all the letters of the alphabet.
   Example: __at, __unch, and sa__

Compensations:

1. Emphasize that reading is much more than sounding out words in isolation — that it's appropriate and common to use all kinds of clues: pictures, word shape, context meaning, etc. (Note: Students with spelling problems often think this is cheating. Let them know it's what good readers do.)

Auditory Discrimination Problems - continued

2. Have student make her own dictionary of frequently used words in a pocket-size notebook. She can use the dictionary as a spelling checker.

3. Have student learn to use the dictionary quickly to look up words. Work on sounding out word closely enough to know where to look.

4. Have student count the number of sounds (syllables) they hear and explain that each part must have a vowel.

5. Teach student the different ways to spell a particular sound. Many dictionaries provide a comprehensive list of all the alternative ways to spell a sound, and the list usually proceeds from the most common choice to the least common.

6. Have student use editing devices such as the spelling checker on a word processor.

7. Teach student to use a thesaurus to look up words that are difficult to spell. This may be easier and faster than using a dictionary.
   Example: If a student can't spell the word "excellent", she can look up the words under the heading "good" or "great" — chances are she will recognize the word she is trying to spell.

5. **Skipping Lines or Words When Reading:** Student's eyes jump ahead over words or sentences, especially on pages full of words with little variety of letter size or sentence spacing. This may happen even if the reader uses his finger or pencil as a guide.

Remediation:

1. Allow and encourage student to use a guide — finger, pencil, ruler, or 3x5 index card — when reading. If the student still has difficulties, have her check off lines as she reads them.

2. Teach student to ask himself whether his reading is making sense or not. Toward this goal, have student complete exercises on sentence fragments and complete sentences. Or, use teacher generated selections with missing words or lines, e.g. cartoons and photo captions which show the importance of every word and a line. Also, have student pause between sentences to see that each sentence has its own idea.

3. Teach student to read groups of words together. When words are isolated, the relation of one word to the next is difficult to see.

4. Have student stop after each sentence and summarize what she just read.

Compensations:

1. Have student plan to use a finger, pencil, or 3x5 index card as a guide for words and lines.

2. Have student reread sentences and reading selections, especially for important material.

3. Have student read aloud to another person; a listener can hear errors more readily than a reader. Or, have student just read aloud to himself; he may catch the error.

4. Have a local copy center enlarge particular reading selections. This will increase the spaces between words and lines.

6. **Trouble Processing Written, But Not Verbal, Information:** Student understands information less quickly in written form than in oral form, even though student may have a high level of reading comprehension.

   Behavioral Clue: Student has difficulty getting started on work on her own, or often shows up for class early so that, by the time class starts, she's in full swing.

Remediation:

1. Have student read information out loud or privately, at least concentrate on "hearing" the words inside his head — hearing the words as he says them silently.

2. Have student concentrate only on that written information, e.g. directions, which is confusing. Similarly, have student eliminate bad answers on tests and just concentrate on the reasonable choices.

3. Teach student to focus on the command words in large chunks of information.

4. Have student summarize written information or put it into her own words.

5. Teach student to translate words into pictures, either mental or physical.

   Example: For math word problems, encourage student to repeat the given and implied information with a drawing. Since most students can recall a movie scene by scene, encourage them to create a movie in their mind of the reading selection. They can think back to these created scenes and translate them into words.

Compensations:

1. Tape directions for student.

2. Use books on tape or educational videotapes; many libraries now have extensive collections.

3. Encourage students to ask other students for help or confirmation on a particular set of directions.

4. Use exercises with plenty of examples and/or answers in the back of the book.

7. **Leaving Off or Changing Endings:** Student guesses at word or gets beginning sounds and guesses at the ending.

Remediation:

1. Have student reread a finished writing sample, either silently — or out loud if he processes oral information better.
2. Emphasize understanding and meaning, rather than speed or pronunciation, for reading selections.
3. Teach word clumps with various endings.

   Example: Use word wheels or a set of "split" 3x5 cards which has roots on the left side, suffixes on the right. Have students choose between words with different endings in order to fill in blanks in sentences.
4. Have student summarize written information or put it into her own words.

Compensations:

1. Provide student with a list of ways to check and edit his own work.
2. Check for hearing or vision problems; if problems exist, encourage student to get help.
3. Speak to student at a reduced rate of speed, emphasizing the sounds of the words.
4. Show a discouraged or frustrated student that leaving off or changing endings may not affect comprehension, and is therefore not an insurmountable problem.

8. **Trouble with Alphabet Sequencing:** Student doesn't know, or forgets, the order of the letters of the alphabet.

Remediation:

1. Have student overlearn the alphabet, one part at a time. Break down the alphabet into smaller parts — beginning, middle, and end. Have student practice writing both the capital and lower case letters repeatedly.
2. Teach student the alphabet song.
3. Make flashcards with capital letters on one side and lower case letters on the other and number the cards. (This requires that the student be able to count up to 26.) Split the flashcards up into groups, providing a new group only after mastery of the old.

Compensations:

1. Give student a pocket size card of the alphabet.
2. Record the alphabet on tape and have the student follow along with a printed alphabet.
3. Give student "tricks" where possible.

   Example: By placing thumb and forefinger together and holding the other finger out straight, the student can make "b" on the left hand and "d" on the right and can see the order of the two letters.
4. Post a huge alphabet on the classroom wall in a place visible to all students.

9. **Bizarre Spelling:** Student writes word in a way which has little or no correspondence with the sound of the word.

   Behavioral Clue: This problem is sometimes seen in stroke victims.

Remediation:

1. Have student reread what she has witten to see if she can catch her own errors.
2. Review phonics

Compensations:

1. Have student ask a friend or another student to edit, or use a computer program such as Spellcheck.
2. Free student from distractions, especially noise. Explain to student that we all will sometimes be writing and will put down bizarre letters because we are talking or trying to listen to a conversation at the same time.
3. Provide student with a list of common words to use in checking the spelling in a writing sample.
4. Use electronic devices like the Franklin speller.

10. **Illegible Penmanship:** Student has difficulty writing letters and words clearly.

    Behavioral Clue: Student avoids written tasks, writes words instead of sentences, or writes painstakingly slowly.

Remediation:

1. Have student practice making lists and writing checks. Motivation for good penmanship will be high for these important tasks.
2. Have student practice forming letters on three-lined paper
3. Give copies of cursive and manuscript letters to use as a guide.
4. Allow student to choose his own paper and writing instrument; let student try a variety of them and see.
5. Encourage student to choose one writing style and concentrate on improving it. For example, many adults use manuscript writing. Student may feel that cursive is more appropriate, however.

Compensations:

1. Have student use a typewriter or word processor.
2. Have student improve communication skills, especially on telephones, so that she can get information and accomplish certain tasks without writing.

11. Trouble Getting Words from Brain to Hand: Student has difficulty expressing himself as he would like.

Behavioral Clue: Student says "I don't remember," and "I don't know," in response to questions, asks teacher often to repeat questions or directions.

Remediation:

1. Have student write sentences from tapes.
2. Give student exercises of scrambled sentences.
3. Encourage student to use scrap paper to work out possible choices or a first draft of an answer.
4. Emphasize quality of answer, not correct spelling or grammar.

   Example: The new essay question on the writing section of the G.E.D. test is scored holistically, emphasizing reasoning, not details of spelling or punctuation.
5. Have student write answer exactly as she answers it orally.

Compensations:

1. Encourage student to take more time to formulate, write, and check answers.
2. Urge student to concentrate on the task, not on speed.
3. Have student write sentences, leaving blanks for words she can't remember how to spell or for a word choice she can't remember or decide between.
4. Take emphasis away from spelling.
5. Take emphasis away from perfection, i.e., reward all progress, not just perfect work.

12. **Understanding Place Value:** Student cannot write numbers in correct columns or in correct sequence.

Remediation:

1. Use money, cuisenaire rods, or car mileage examples to demonstrate place value.

2. Use graph paper or lined paper turned sideways to help create a visual picture of lined up columns.

3. Discuss how rules for writing numbers are different from the rules for writing words, e.g. when you write five hundred sixty, you don't write 500 60. Elicit the student's thinking by asking her to write down some numbers that you provide. You can then show the student that she was on the right track — that is, 500 + 60 = 560.

Compensations:

1. Teach student to name the respective commas when they are reading or writing large numbers.

   Example: In the number 1,657,482 the first comma is read "million" and the comma on the right is read "thousand."

13. Trouble Memorizing Math Facts: Student doesn't remember math facts at some level — addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division — and doesn't have strategies for learning these facts.

Behavioral Clue: Student avoids math and/or works slowly and makes mistakes with math facts.

Remediation:

1. Teach student the relationships between addition and subtraction, multiplication and division, and addition and multiplication. Use teacher generated exercises (See examples on pages 19 & 20) for practice.

2. Teach student that you can reverse addition and multiplication facts and still get the same answer, e.g. $7 + 6 = 6 + 7$ and $8 \times 5 = 5 \times 8$.

3. Use special mnemonic devices and strategies to help student memorize or understand certain math facts.

   Example: Student can determine the multiplication facts for nines on his fingers in the following way. Have student "number" his fingers from 1 to 10, beginning with his left pinky and ending with his right pinky. Bend down the finger which isn't the nine, e.g. the seventh finger in 9×7. Count the number of fingers respectively, on either side of the dropped finger; this gives you the answer — 63.

4. Teach student to build on the math facts she already knows. Block out those parts of a table or chart of facts which the student has already mastered. Determine if there's a patterrn to the difficult facts, e.g. anything with a 6 or an 8. Many students are much more confident when they realize that they already know 85 out of 100 multiplication facts.

5. Teach student to "hinge" on the facts they already know.

   Example: If a student is having trouble memorizing the multiplication facts for 4's and 6's teach him to use the 5's. $8 \times 6 = (8 \times 5) + 8$.

6. Take advantage of computer software (e.g. Factmaster) which requires student to master (The teacher determines what constitutes mastery.) certain math facts before moving on to new facts.

Trouble Memorizing Math Facts — continued

Compensations:

1. Allow student to use a calculator. Provide student with exercises to improve her calculator skills, e.g. when to use which function, how to check work, etc.

2. Teach student to use an abacus if he is uncomfortable with a calculator.

3. Teach student to generate her own multiplication table quickly to use in test situations (such as G.E.D. where calculators are not permitted). Or, encourage student to carry a copy of a table of math facts for everyday use.

4. Provide student with alternatives in math problems.

   Example: Once a student understands that multiplication is just repeated addition, he may choose either operation to solve certain problems or to check his work.

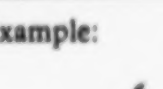
5. Move student on to other work if she is unsuccessful with the above strategies. Don't let the memorization of math facts be a barrier to learning higher math. Some students who get "hung up" on the facts prove to be good problem-solvers.

SAMPLE MATH WORK

More Number Groups

Below are groups of three numbers. Arrange the numbers with the math symbols "+", "–", "×", and "=" to make true statements.

Example:



3 + 3 = 6

6 – 3 = 3

OR

3 × 3 = 9

4 2 8		3 0 3	
4 8 4		3 3 1	
16 4 4		3 9 3	
2 2 4		9 9 18	
6 6 0		18 6 3	
36 6 6		5 5 10	
6 12 6		25 5 5	
2 6 12		5 5 0	

SAMPLE MATH WORK

Even More Number Groups

Below are groups of three numbers. Arrange the numbers with the math symbols "+", "–", and "×" to make true statements.

Example: 7, 9, 16 — $7 + 9 = 16$, $16 - 7 = 9$

3, 8, 11		6, 12, 6	
3, 6, 3		5, 0, 5	
14, 8, 6		0, 1, 1	
11, 4, 7		17, 9, 8	

Now, you will be given only two numbers. Fill in the third number and write a true statement with the math symbols.

Example: 5, 12, □ — $5 + 7 = 12$, $12 - 5 = 7$, $5 + 12 = 17$, $17 - 12 = 5$

0, 5, □		10, 3, □	
16, 8, □		8, 8, □	
7, 11, □		3, 8, □	

14. Sequencing Problems: Student has trouble with remembering the order of months of the year, days of the week, numbers, and/or letters of the alphabet. Student has trouble following the steps of a process in the correct order.

Remediation:

1. Have student write out the steps of a process or a sequence in words.
2. Use mnemonic devices such as the alphabet song to teach order and sequence.
3. Use manipulatives such as 3x5 cards with days of the week, letters of the alphabet, etc., printed on one side; student can physically put things in the right order. If the student knows the sequence of numbers, these cards can be self-correcting by writing numbers on the back side.
4. Have student practice physically arranging a sequence with "strip stories" — paragraphs, short stories, recipes, or cartoons — which have been cut into pieces or sections.
5. Ask student to show how he uses sequences every day when he drives to school, follows a recipe, gets dressed, or does laundry.

Compensations:

1. Provide student with written-out directions or step-by-step examples as a guide for sequences. Some students may need this aid every time they encounter a particular sequence, not just the first time they encounter a new process.

   Example: To put list of names in alphabetical order.

   1. Look at the last name.
   2. Start with the first letter of the last name.
   3. If two names start with the same first letter, look at the second letter.
   4. If two people have the same last name, look at their first names . . . etc.

2. Encourage student to keep a pocket copy of needed information such as the alphabet, a calendar, etc.
3. If student is having trouble generating a sequence when she writes, provide a writing "skeleton" with spaces for topic sentences and supporting details.

15. Parts/Whole Problems: Student has trouble seeing and understanding the connection and relationship between a main idea and its supporting ideas, both in reading and writing.

Remediation:

1. Have student highlight the main idea of a reading selection in one color and the supporting ideas and details in a different color.

2. Arrange "strip" stories for a student; cut up a story and have the student arrange the parts in the order that makes sense to him. This will help you and the student to analyze his thinking.

3. Offer an opinion and various relevant and irrelevant arguments and have the student decide which reasons support the opinion and which do not. Or, give the student a mood and ask which details in a story demonstrate this mood.

4. Have student diagram and analyze movies or television shows.

Compensations:

1. Provide student with "skeletons" for writing. Gradually remove the titles of the categories, and finally remove the skeleton altogether, if possible.

   Example:
   Main idea: _____
   Supporting detail #1: _____
   Supporting detail #2: _____
   Supporting detail #3: _____

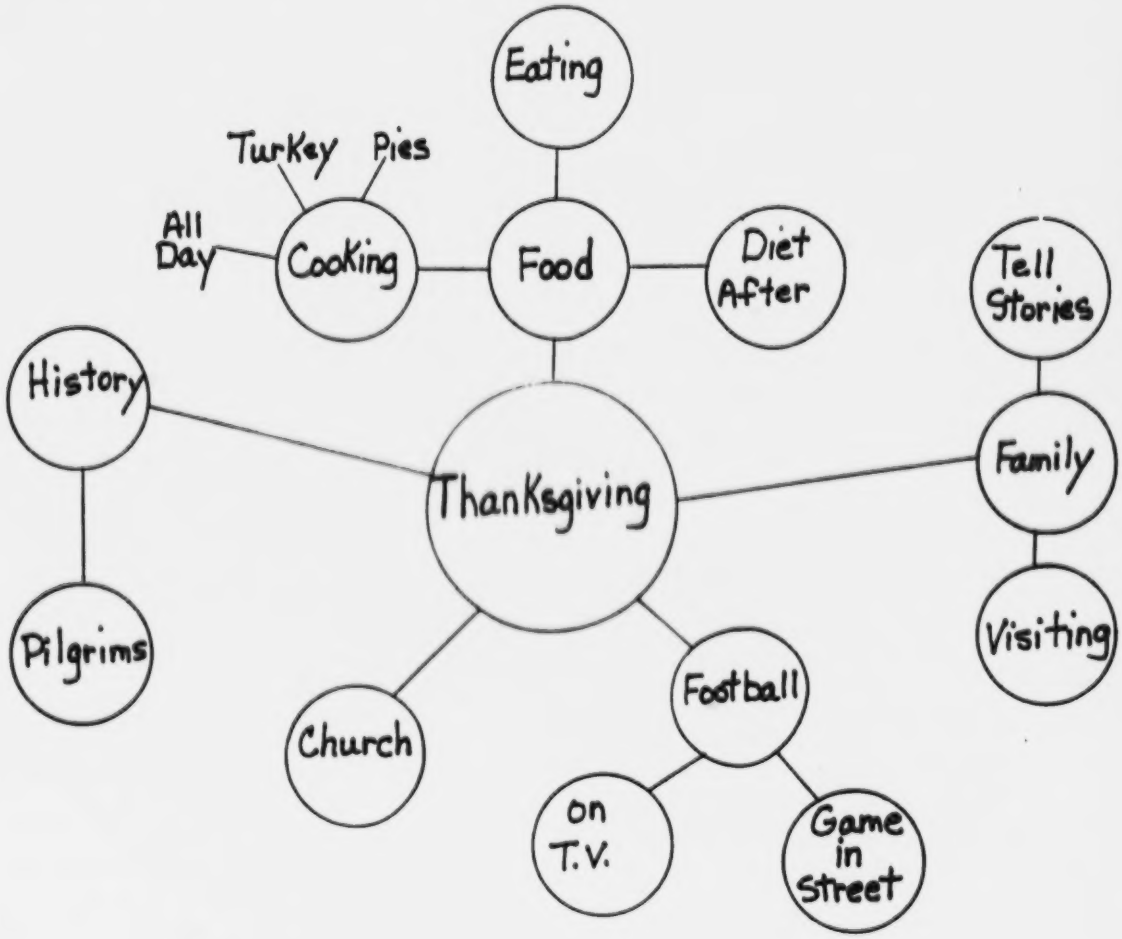
   Opinion: _____
   Reason #1: _____
   Reason #2: _____
   Reason #3: _____

   Overall mood: _____
   Supporting detail #1: _____
   Supporting detail #2: _____
   Supporting detail #3: _____

2. For students who tend to brainstorm more easily than they follow through on a line or reasoning, use a balloon method for writing. Gradually remove the titles of the different balloons, and finally remove the balloons altogether, if possible. See page 23 for example.

STUDY SKILLS PROBLEMS

Parts/Whole Problems — continued:



3. Teach some general information about main ideas, such as the fact that the main idea will usually be either in the first or the last sentence of a paragraph. Teach key words pointing to main ideas such as "in summary", "almost always", "in general", etc. and to supporting ideas such as "for example", "for instance", "first, second, third", etc.

4. Have student repeat/read written work to another student for suggestions.

16. Trouble Following Written Directions: Student often does not follow written directions accurately, omits steps, or does not complete work according to the original directions.

Behavioral Clue: Student expresses a dislike for written work; student frequently (or constantly) needs oral help to complete written work

Remediation:

1. Have student practice numbering the actual steps to be taken in a set of directions.
2. Have student rewrite directions in her own words after reading (without referring to the actual text.)
3. Have student read each part of a set of directions singly and orally discuss the meaning of each.
4. Have student circle or underline the key words in a set of directions. This will help you to determine whether the student is placing the greatest emphasis on command words, capitalized words, bold print words, etc.

Compensations:

1. Read directions with the student, pointing out the key words.
2. If student doesn't follow directions on a particular exercise, don't ask student to redo the assignment. Instead, discuss what the student learned by doing it his way and whether the original directions were essential or not.
3. Assign exercises with only one set of easy directions at the beginning.
4 Always give directions orally if all other strategies fail.

17. **Trouble Following Verbal Directions:** Student has difficulty understanding verbal directions, requests, and explanations.

    Behavioral Clue: Student likes to take work home and is quick to respond "I understand" to complex and difficult oral remarks.

Remediation:

1. Encourage student to take notes when you are explaining an idea or giving direction. Provide student with shorcuts for effective notetaking.

   Example: Leave out vowels when taking notes and insert vowels when rewriting notes. Or, use abreviations and symbols, e.g. "@" for "at", "w/" for "with", "+" for "and", etc.

2. Encourage students to ask questions when they receive verbal information.

3. Have student repeat verbal directions in his own words.

4. Concenrate on verbal information with student. Spend a part of each class just talking about exercises with student.

5. Encourage student to work on her listening skills. Have student make several phone calls a day for information. Have student put radio or taped messages into words.

Compensations:

1. Give student written directions in addition to, or instead of, verbal directions.

2. Speak with simple sentence structures, speak slowly, and repeat key ideas and statements.

18. **Lack of Strategies for Problem Solving:** Student may have adequate skills, but can't apply these skills to difficult, long, or unfamiliar problems. In math, student can manipulate numbers and operations well, but can't apply these skills to word problems.

    Behavioral Clue: Student shows a low frustration level and often says "I can't do it" or I don't need to show the work" when confronting word problems. Student may also think that there is only one correct way or process to get the answer.

Remediation:

1. Boost student's confidence. If he is stuck or frustrated, back up one step or simplify the problem so that student can experience success.

2. Have student underline, highlight, or circle the key words, especially command words, in a written problem.

3. Give student some exercises where no questions are asked but where information is provided. Have student determine, write, and solve some questions of her own.

4. Have student write out the steps to attacking word problems to use as a guide.

5. Have student brainstorm possible solutions. Explain to the student that the only time spent on a word problem which is wasted is time which provides no information; a dead end may not get the correct answer, but it still provides some information.

6. Encourage the student to use computer programs which develop skills and strategies for solving math word problems.

7. Teach student to replace large numbers in a word problem with small numbers, fractions and decimals with whole numbers, and complicated numbers with rounded numbers. The student may then be able to determine the operation more easily, and she can then use the operation with the original numbers.

Lack of Strategies for Problem Solving — continued

8. Provide a list of word problems and ask student to group the problems. Determine whether the student is grouping the problems according to the type of numbers involved, the operation required, or some other way. Most students experience greater success when they can determine the operation required first, not the type of number involved.

9. Encourage student to draw a picture or chart of the information provided.

10. Have student determine what a reasonable answer would look like — this may provide clues as to what math operation to use.

Compensations:

1. Encourage student to work backwards on multiple choice tests. Tell student that such tests don't ask the student to get the right answer, but only to pick it out of a list of choices.

2. Teach student to eliminate the obviously wrong answers first. This will simplify the question and give the student some confidence.

3. Have student keep a notebook with a list of key words to look for in word problems and some sample problems with the steps written out.

19. **Not Seeing Patterns:** Student has trouble seeing patterns and similarities between numbers or words.

    Math: Student has difficulty with repeating sequence problems and word problems. The pattern may be specific (e.g. subtracting the smaller number from the larger) or global (e.g. noting the similarities of all ratio problems.)

    Verbal: Student has trouble identifying patterns of words, sentences, paragraphs, or ideas when reading and writing.

Remediation:

1. Use rhyming words to generate and demonstrate sequences and patterns.
2. Use pattern wheels for words.
3. Use teacher-generated worksheets to show relationships between numbers.

   Example: See page 20

4. Have student locate similarities in words, sentences, and word problems.
5. Have student generate patterns of her own and questions to go along with these patterns.
6. Provide student with a sampling of word problems and ask student to group the problems. Determine whether the student is grouping the problems according to the type of numbers used, the required operation, or some other way. See if the student could group the problem in some other ways. This will help you and the student to analyze his thinking.

Compensations:

1. Show student step-by step how a particular pattern works.
2. Ask "clumping" questions which force student to think back over material to note similarities.
3. Teach student a variety of strategies for tackling hard problems, especially problems not typically viewed as mathematical or verbal.

   Example: Use mazes, puzzles, and brain twisters. ***Games*** magazine is an excellent source for creative thinking exercises.

20. Not Able to Generalize or Transfer: Student has difficulty relating and synthesizing material. Student has difficulty applying what she's learned to new material or to life situations.

Behavioral Clue: Student fails to make significant improvements in understanding or test scores even though accomplishing great quantities of work. Student likes to move quickly from book to book, whether finishing each or not. Student often chooses material that is too easy. Student may be preoccupied with attendance and with tangible criteria such as number of pages done.

Remediation:

1. Have student, teacher, and counselor set very specific goals, especially academic goals.
2. Quiz student frequently to stimulate interest in thoroughly understanding material; some students thrive on such pressure.
3. Teach the transfer of school material explicitly; outline the applications of schoolwork to daily life. Do not assume that the student will "see" the applications for himself.
4. Have student design an excercise to teach a skill so that she can see when details and conclusions are used.
5. Use carefully sequenced books which gradually increase the difficulty of exercises and which review material frequently.
6. Use rule of three — present rule or material in at least three settings.

Compensations:

1. Reward this type of student for success in getting correct answers or improving test scores — not for speed, number of pages done, or attendance.
2. Limit the number of different books student is allowed to work on or limit the number of pages in a particular book for a particular time period. Encourage student to put more energy into more creative, difficult, or open-ended assignments.
3. Concentrate on the most important skills for the student — skills that will help in his everyday personal living, in job-seeking, etc.

21. Upset About Exceptions to the Rules: Student loses confidence in ability when confronted with exceptions to rules and complains that the rule is useless to learn if there are exceptions. For example, student may be disturbed if she discovers that "lead" may be pronouced like"led" in "lead paint."

Remediation:

1. Have student note the many ways in which he (and you) already use exceptions, e.g. I always do my grocery shopping at Shaw's unless it's Tuesday afternoon when I go to Janetos'.

2. Show student that even if she fails to learn all the exceptions, the rule will still help her immensely — talk about the probability of a rule.

Compensations:

1. Don't call the idea in question a rule; call it a pattern.

2. Provide student with a list of key words which are frequently mispronounced or misspelled.

3. Don't teach certain words as exceptions to a rule; teach them as a separate case, i.e. as sight words.

4. Don't show student exceptions for a certain length of time.

   Example: Don't teach the word "steak" when you teach a student the long-a words for reading and spelling.

5. If a student completes an exercise but gets the exceptions to a rule incorrect, don't mark the exceptions wrong; concentrate on the rule and on the success of the student.

22. Problems with Analysis of Task: Student cannot see how the smaller parts of an excercise work together to produce the whole. Student often doesn't understand why he's working on certain material.

Behavioral Clue: Student does work too quickly, is impulsive, or is overly quiet and reluctant to seek help.

Remediation:

1. Structure the task into small(er) components and steps.
2. Encourage the student to constantly review what she is doing and why.
3. Have student say or write directions each time the directions change.
4. Have student design his own exercise, complete with directions, to be used by himself and the rest of the class. Limit the student to covering one specific objective or idea.
5. Ask student to pick out the work she wishes to complete and to discuss her choices with you.

Compensations:

1. Have student ask themselves "Why am I doing this?", "What do I hope to learn?", and "What is this about?"
2. Write out a general plan for understanding and completing a specific task and have student keep on 3x5 cards or in master notebook.
3. Highlight specific instructions with a highlighter marker for student.
4. Begin each class with an overview and end each class with a dialogue about the material covered in class.
5. Encourage student who is overly quiet to ask questions so that he doesn't have to redo the task.

23. Takes Excessive Time to Look Up Words in a Dictionary, Phone Book, Etc.: Student cannot find words quickly in an alphabetical or categorical listing. This is an important obstacle in working on spelling and vocabulary; part of students' frustration and lack of success with these larger goals is due to the difficulty they have looking up words.

Remediation:

1. Teach student how to use guide words, tables of contents, indices, etc.
2. Teach student alphabetizing strategies. If necessary, begin by teaching the sequence of the alphabet.
3. Provide lots of practice looking up names and words in phone books and dictionaries. Race student against another student or against the clock and chart her progress.
4. Teach student skimming and scanning techniques in other areas, e.g. maps, graphs, and diagrams.
5. Discuss how reference material is organized.

Compensations:

1. Have student keep her own phone book and dictionary for references with words, names, and numbers that are important to her. Help student organize this book if necessary.
2. Encourage student to circle the numbers he uses in the phone book.
3. Use a small (abridged) dictionary to look up words.

MEMORY PROBLEMS

24. General Memory Problems: Student doesn't remeber what was studied yesterday, last month, or last year.

Remediation:

1. Find out from student how he remembers personal information such as names and phone numbers; help him apply these methods to school work. Involve student in figuring out his own best method.

2. Frame what is taught: make it very clear what is to be remembered; write down main ideas; and review frequently — at the end of one session and at the beginning of another.

3. Teach that learning is intentional, and help create intention to remember by providing meaningful material.

4. Teach student about mnemonic devices, e.g. HOMES for the names of the Great Lakes. Be sure that student knows that different devices work for different people, that it's okay if a device that works for you doesn't work for her.

5. Try to use an exercise which is as active as possible. Studies indicate that students remember the least information when they are solely reading, hearing, or seeing information, more information when they use two of these methods in combination, and the most when they verbalize their thinking as they do an exercise.

Compensations:

1. Help student make a master study notebook in which she keeps the main ideas from each day's work for easy study and review.

2. Have student with memory problems keep a *personal* notebook, too, for important information he needs for home or work.

3. Personalize material. Talk with a student about why it's important to **her.**

MEMORY PROBLEMS

25. **Problems with Short-term Memory:** Student has difficulty recalling information processed as recently as a few minutes ago.

Remediation:

1. Encourage student to write a summary at the end of each paragraph, lesson, or day, as necessary.
2. Teach student various memory strategies, e.g. encourage student to visualize as many concepts as possible.
3. Have student circle key words, sentences, and paragraphs when reading. Encourage students to write notes in margins. If student doesn't think this last suggestion is applicable, show him some of your own books that you have written in.
4. Teach student about mnemonic devices, e.g. Every Good Boy Does Fine to remember the order of the notes on musical scale. Help student to create devices which are meaningful to her by using names of people in her family, etc.
5. Encourage student to review completed work before going on to new material.
6. Have student teach another student what he has just learned.

Compensations:

1. Provide frequent review and frequent small quizzes rather than tests at the end of a unit of work.
2. Concentrate on the most important material for the student, i.e. life skills —driving test, checkbooks, organization skills, job skills, etc.
3. Pair student with another and have them read aloud to each other and summarize their work frequently in their own words.
4. Differentiate between what must be remembered and what can be looked up.

MEMORY PROBLEMS

26. Problems with Long-term Memory: Student has difficulty retaining information taken in at a previous time and forgets previously mastered material.

Remediation:

1. Use exercises which build one concept on top of another.
2. Review key processes or rules frequently.
3. Have students habitually leave some exercises or questions blank in their workbooks to allow for frequent future review.
4. Have student teach another student.

Compensations:

1. Have student prepare a notebook of important material that she uses frequently and can refer to often.
2. Find out what the most important material and skills are for the student and concentrate on this material.

   Example: Student may want to memorize math tables, but it might be more appropriate that he be able to use a calculator, balance a checkbook, use public tranportation, etc.
3. Explain to students that it is okay to forget old material once a goal —driver's license, G.E.D. — is accomplished. Teach students how and where to look up information if they do forget it.
4. Point out that we all forget.

27. Short Attention Span: Student cannot focus attention on schoolwork or other tasks for very long without supervision or reminders.

Behavioral Clue: Student often leaves class before work is completed, moves around a lot, and engages teacher or other students in off-topic conversations. Student often says "I'm all done," before work has been completed or makes frequent trips to the bathroom or smoking area. Student may have trouble holding a job.

Remediation:

1. Have student make a written plan detailing how much time will be spent on each task. Have student work on short and long range goal sheets and timelines and discuss how much progress student is making.
2. Encourage student to find a small, uncluttered workplace both at home and at school.
3. Break work into small, well-defined tasks, each of which gives student a sense of completion and success.
4. Do not allow off-topic discussion during task-completion times.
5. Keep study times as structured as possible.
6. Allow student to listen to a Walkman in class during reading or writing exercises.
7. Isolate student when necessary, being careful not to alienate her.

Compensation:

1. Allow student more movement.

   Example: Have student do some work on the board or look up some information from a resource area.
2. Give more frequent but shorter breaks.
3. Break tasks into shorter segments.
4. Vary class time so that different learning styles can be addressed.

Short Attention Span continued:

5. Intersperse academic work with tasks which appear to student to be non-academic but which require specific skills.

   Example: Have student file, copy, and collate material or write cards or letters.

28. **Cultural Impoverishment:** Student exhibits poor habits of hygiene, poor manners in dealing with others, a limited vocabulary, very little curiosity, and an overall lack of knowledge outside his own immediate social milieu.

Remediation:

1. Take student on field trips.
2. Show student slides or photographs of trips you have taken, especially local trips.
3. Invite speakers on subjects such as health, insurance, law, security, nutrition, money management, etc.
4. Play trivia-type games on general information, e.g. geography, famous people, inventions, etc.
5. Discuss the steps of a new experience with a student before she tries it, e.g. taking a bus, eating in a restaurant, registering to vote, etc.
6. Play discussion-type games which require students to discuss his reason for ethical choices, opinions, etc.

Compensations:

1. Do not expose student to new situations without careful preparation.
2. Have another, non-threatening person, especially a counselor, if available, discuss personal issues and problems so the student won't be embarrassed in class or feel offended.

29. Low Frustration Level: Student rarely completes task once it becomes difficult; vents discouragement loudly; and fakes knowledge in order to avoid difficult tasks.

Behavioral Clues: Student has poor attendance, makes appointments during class time, backs away from challenges which might not end successfully, and says tasks and exercises are irrelevant.

Remediation:

1. Help student to divide work into small, manageable increments.
2. Use a standard timetable for completion.
3. Give student reasons for each task.
4. Give student work that has multiple applications and explain the importance of each.

   Example: Memorizing math tables will allow student to complete work faster and more easily, give student background for division and higher math, help student to do comparison shopping, help student to pass G.E.D., etc
5. Give student lots of positive reinforcement for small successes.
6. Have student decide what he wants to do and discuss his choice.

Compensations:

1. Always give student work that can successfully completed in a short time span.
2. Only correct the specific topic at hand.

   Example: If student is studying how to spell the long-a sound and spells "airplane" as "aerplain" only correct the "ai" — come back to the "aer" another time.

30. **Problems with Time Managment:** Student stays on one task too long, can't plan how to finish things, feels overwhelmed by her daily schedule, and often arrives late or has to leave early.

Remediation:

1. Help student to create a master notebook with schedules, assignments, and daily or weekly lists of things to do. Show student your own calendar and list of things to do, buy, etc.
2. Keep a record of how long a task really takes for future use.
3. Teach student how to brainstorm, prioritize, and decide between different options and alternatives.
4. Have student practice estimating times for tasks.
5. Help student to prioritize studies and other events.
6. Have student keep a small calendar for his/her purse or wallet with the same appointments and lists as his/her home calendar.
7. Help student fill in a 24-hour-a-day calendar for the week to see where there are patterns or where there might be free time. Categorize the hours to see how student spends time. See page 41 for example.

Compensations:

1. Create a scheduled check-in time with a person who monitors progress and reassesses time management problems.
2. Help student make a specific time line for task completion.
3. Help student create short and long range goals with short and long term calendars.
4. Encourage student to wear an easily read wristwatch with an alarm system for timing tasks.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

TIME	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
7:00-8							
8:00-9							
9:00-10							
10:00-11							
11:00-12							
12:00-1							
1:00-2							
2:00-3							
3:00-4							
4:00-5							
5:00-6							
6:00-7							
7:00-8							
8:00-9							
9:00-10							
10:00-11							
11:00-12							
12:00-1							

31. Extreme Anxiety About Mistakes: Student is very nervous about mistakes and requests work that is too easy — won't take risks.

Behavioral Clue: Student sits apart from other people, has poor attendance, a low frustration level, and loves copying work.

Remediation:

1. Talk with student about his feelings about mistakes and discuss how mistakes are a part of learning.
2. Break a difficult task into small parts for quicker success.
3. Provide tasks that give student success but which are increasingly slightly more difficult.
4. Give student tasks which appear non-academic but which require academic skills, e.g. alphabetizing, filing, finding information for teacher, etc.

Compensations:

1. Allow appropriate opportunities for student to ventilate frustration. You don't need to condone swearing, but you don't need to prohibit it completely if it appears to be important to the student.
2. Allow student greater movement, e.g. changing seats, taking breaks, leaning back in chairs, etc.
3. Show student sample of your own work which includes mistakes.
4. Encourage student to work with a pen or without an eraser.
5. Give student lots of personal attention and reassurance.
6. If student is nervous because of the other students, allow student to sit apart from the class, come in early or leave late, or refer student to a one-on-one tutoring situation.
7. Screen out vision and hearing problems.
8. Encourage student to ask questions.

Extreme Anxiety About Mistakes — continued

9. Don't "over-correct" student's paper; correct one thing which needs work and ignore the other errors.

10. Show students who are trying to pass the G.E.D. how many answers they can answer incorrectly and still pass.

32. Inability to Work Independently: Student requires constant attention and one-to-one help, even on previously mastered material. (Note: We don't have in mind students who need constant attention because they are working on very basic materials and skills, e.g. students learning vowel sounds. Their inability to work alone is a function of their skill level, not their thinking processes.)

Remediation:

1. Work out a schedule with the student which shows times for working on individual tasks as well as "check-in" times for student to get positive reinforcement, new assignments, and answers for their work or questions.
2. Have a student work with books on tape, either from the local library or made by the teacher.
3. Have student work on a computer, since the computer provides the student with the continuous "discussion" and feedback she needs.
4. Intersperse academic tasks with work student can do alone and without help: journal writing, letter writing, non-academic tasks, and reading for enjoyment.
5. If student requires so much attention that he is disruptive to the class atmosphere, create a different schedule for the student. Have the student show up early or stay late, come to class one day a week instead of two, or take a two-week break from class.
6. Encourage the rest of the staff to show concern and interest in the student's progress and life.

Compensations:

1. Put student into a structured small group situation.
2. Refer student to tutorial program where she will get one-to-one assistance.

33. Trouble with Concentration: Student is easily distracted from work.

Behavioral Clue: Student sits apart from other people and often completes work at home as a regular pattern.

Remediation:

1. Use student-generated materials, such as experience stories; they will have intrinsic interest.
2. Use a timer to define reading time.
3. Break up long assignments into small pieces.
4. Allow student to listen to a Walkman at low volume while he completes reading or writing exercises.
5. Have student practice skimming and scanning work before attacking assignment.
6. Use materials which require student to review completed work before beginning new work.
7. Depending on the student, offer materials which ask student to use a variety of skills or only one skill — whichever seems to work better for the individual.

Compensations:

1. Have student choose the type of work and the workplace.
2. Plan out the student's class time.
3. Use a computer, since it focuses student's attention in a non-threatening manner.
3. Put student in a quiet place with fewer extraneous sensory stimuli, e.g. a study carrel. Or, if student learns best with others, allow student to work with another under a time constraint.
5. Closely monitor student to make sure she isn't getting bogged down on a particular question or task.
6. Indicate promptly if student is off-task and redirect with key words and prompts.
7. Encourage student to come in for individual tutoring or just for quiet time by coming in early or leaving late.

34. Low Self Esteem: Student often fails to complete or even try work, complaining "I'm no good at this," or "I can't do it."

Behavioral Clue: Student has poor attendance and a negative body image.

Remediation:

1. Foster group support for taking risks and for seeing success as based on risk-taking.
2. Talk with student about his feelings and fears.
3. Involve student in setting educational goals.
4. Provide more frequent testing so student can see the progress she is making.
5. Post information on other adult education students on a class bulletin board.
6. Encourage the rest of the staff to show concern and interest in the student's progress and life.
7. Give student printed or teacher-generated self esteem exercise.

   Hint: Check with junior and senior high school counselors; they may have material which can be adapted.
8. Make a personal card or make a phone call if student is absent two or more consecutive times.
9. Encourage student to volunteer at school or elsewhere.
10. Encourage other students in your class to congratulate the student with low esteem on his progress.

Compensations:

1. Experiment with more aids which make learning easier and therfore rewarding — typewriters, computers, and word processors.
2. Provide student with a peer in class for mutual encouragement.
3. Provide answer sheet so student can correct her own work.
4. Reward the student for his success.

35. **Inability to Work with Others:** Student feels uncomfortable with or overwhelmed by other people, especially other students.

Remediation:

1. Provide small non-academic tasks for this student to do with several others. Give positive feedback to help foster positive relationships.

   Example: Have student work with others to set up chairs for an upcoming event.

2. Have student interview others for simple information.

Compensations:

1. Ask student to assist another student of different ability in a peer tutoring situation. This may or may not work best with someone of a different age or sex. Use your judgment. Even for very basic students, there are often areas in which they are more proficient than someone else.

   Example: Some students who are good in reading need help in math and vice versa.

2. Allow student to work alone.

36. Doesn't Understand Figurative Ambiguous Language: Student doesn't understand idioms or is confused by words or phrases which have more than one meaning.

Behavioral Clue: Student misunderstands or takes literally a joke or a side remark and feels hurt.

Remediation:

1. Use a dictionary of idioms and, when possible, simple cartoons to teach idioms explicitly.
2. Use references and materials which concentrate on idioms.

   Example: ***Catching on to American Idioms,*** by Esther Ellen-Elmakiss.
3. Teach the multiple meanings of words.

   Example: Ask a student for three meanings for the words "fire," "match," "hit," etc. Or, provide ten sentences with the word "head" and ask student to give the different meanings.

Compensations:

1. Use only idioms that the student knows.
2. Avoid the use of sarcasm, indirect requests, ambiguous statements, multiple meaning words, etc., unless you explain these meanings.
3. Be prepared to talk with student if she feels hurt by a joke.

APPENDIX

i. Federal definition of learning disabilities

ii. Definition of adult learning disabilities from ACLD

iii. Symptom checklist of learing disabilities from ACLD

- Association for Children with Learning Disabilities

FEDERAL DEFINITION OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

"Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write or spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage."

DEFINITION OF ADULT LEARNING DISABILITIES FROM ACLD

The following is a working definition of adult learning disabilities.

*Specific Learning Disabilities is a disorder in one or more of the central nervous system processes involving perceiving, understanding and/or using concepts through verbal (spoken or written language) or nonverbal means. This disorder manifests itself with difficulties in one or more of the following areas: attention, reasoning, memory, communicating, reading, writing, spelling, calculation, coordination, social competence, and emotional maturity. The resulting disorder results in a substantial handicap to employment.

SYMPTOM CHECKLIST OF LEARNING DISABILITIES FROM ACLD

( ) performs differently from day to day

( ) responds inappropriately in many instances

( ) restless, can't stay interested in anything very long, easily distracted

( ) says one thing, means another

( ) difficult to discipline

( ) doesn't adjust well to change

( ) immature speech

( ) doesn't listen well or remember

( ) can't follow multiple directions

( ) forgets easily

( ) has difficulty telling time and telling right from left

( ) has trouble naming familiar people or things

( ) has difficulty sounding out words

( ) writes poorly

( ) reverses letters or places them in incorrect sequences — for example, "d" for "b" and "gril" for girl"

( ) reads poorly if at all

( ) poorly coordinated

( ) trouble understanding words or concepts

( ) late speech development

( ) late gross or fine motor development

( ) impulsive